

CONSERVATION WORKING GROUP

1/27/10

**Environmental Defense Center Conference Room,
906 Garden Street, Santa Barbara**

Present:, Greg Helms (The Ocean Conservancy), Michael Sheehy (SB Channelkeeper), Jackie Dragon (Pacific Environment via conference phone), Debra Herring, Kristi Rieman (EDC), Vic Cox, John Kuizenga, and Mark Brody .

CINMS Staff: Michael Murray provided written comments that were presented on his behalf.

I. INTRODUCTIONS

All attending did self introduction (see "Present" above for more detail).

II. OCEAN ACIDIFICATION

(a) CINMS staff has been tracking how the Ocean Acidification report prepared by CWG and adopted by SAC has made its way through other Sanctuary Council's and through the Sanctuary program. All but four Advisory Councils have adopted a resolution or passed a motion that is supportive of the CINMS Council's recommendations. Three additional Councils (Flower Garden Banks NMS; Gray's Reef NMS; and Monitor NMS) are expected to take an action this year. The Council at the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument is not working on this as they are in a transition stage into a new kind of advisory group.

There is a new web site available now that will be used to share Advisory Council actions that have broad regional effects. Initially this site will host all the OA resolutions:

http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/management/ac/council_actions.html

(b) NOAA Sanctuary Regional Director Bill Douros has indicated that a west coast working group will be tasked with addressing Ocean Acidification in the near future. Details to be worked out include: what it will mean for the regional office to coordinate action for west coast sanctuaries, role of SAC's, and SAC member participation. Issues will include research, education, management, and role of resource protection staff from west coast sanctuaries, and possible involvement of NOAA experts like Dr. Richard Feely. SAC may have an opportunity to recommend a SAC and staff member from CINMS for the group.

III. WHALES AND SHIPPING

(a) CINMS staff had a chance to provide a short briefing on the whale ship strike issue to Dr. Jane Lubchenco on January 11. She was receptive and agreed that this is an important marine spatial planning challenge.

CINMS staff held a meeting in November with NOAA colleagues from the NMFS Office of Protected Resources. The main focus was on moving forward to consider and address the SAC's ship strike recommendations. NMFS is taking steps to convene a scientific workshop designed to facilitate experts sharing information and strategizing on analysis and data needs. CINMS has taken the lead on developing a joint CINMS/NMFS proposal that will be submitted on Jan 28 by a Bren School student team. With NMFS and CINMS serving as clients, the proposal intends to have a student team build on the SAC's recommendations, fleshing out their feasibility, impacts, and evaluating management options.

Steve Katz has continued to seek external funding for whale/shipping research and monitoring. Nothing has come in yet, but there have been some near successes.

(b) CINMS staff plan on reviewing the acoustics report recommendation at the March 19 SAC meeting. Megan McKenna (from Scripps) may be able to deliver a presentation on related work she and her colleagues are doing.

Dan Basta is expected to be at the March 19 SAC meeting. There is an opportunity to remind Dan about the direction the CWG and SAC would like to see acoustics work move in. This will also give Dan a chance to talk about a large ambient acoustic monitoring proposal that he has developed.

Jackie Dragon reported on the progress of a proposed working group on acoustic noise as a joint effort between Cordell Banks and Gulf of the Farallones SAC. There is potential for CINMS CWG and SAC to be linked to that work as it progresses.

Jackie Dragon also reported on the development of a letter to NOAA outlining Best Management Practices that NOAA vessels and contract vessels can take to reduce potential ship strikes and acoustic impacts to whales.

IV. MLPA/MARINE RESERVES

Greg reported on the progress and status of the MLPA process. A final round of stakeholder MPA designs has been completed; four arrays are now on the table representing a largely conservation oriented proposal, a largely fishing proposal, a "cross interest" proposal, and the compromise proposal developed by the Blue Ribbon Task Force. The Fish and Game Commission (FGC) will meet to discuss and perhaps adopt a "preferred alternative" sometime in 2010. It is anticipated that this decision will be made at the FGC meeting on March 3 and 4 in Ontario. Greg and others will be tracking the FGC agendas to see what month this item will appear.

The latest status on the southern California regional proposals will be summarized at Friday's SAC meeting by Marija Vojkovich, CDFG Marine Region Manager.

V. OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY

Kristi reported on the status of the CWG offshore renewable energy report. A Bren Intern has been conducting initial research to identify technology and potential

environmental impacts for wave, wind, and current offshore renewable energy. He is in the preliminary stages of gathering resources and information. Other Sanctuaries that have had experience with offshore renewable energy projects have been contacted. Anyone interested in this topic is encouraged to contact Kristi to ensure that their concerns and issues are addressed.

Kristi, Michael, Greg, and Vic reported on the CEC-hosted stakeholder meeting about the Central Coast WaveConnect project proposed off the coast of Vandenberg Air Force Base. Public meetings will be held on February 3rd at Faulkner Gallery in Santa Barbara (5:30-8:30 pm) and February 4th at the Betteravia Government Center in Santa Maria (6-9 pm).

VI. AQUACULTURE

(a) Congressional testimony was given by NOAA's Jim Balsinger (NMFS' Acting Assistant Administrator) in Sept. 2009, in which he primarily described the need for a Federal permitting and regulatory system for offshore aquaculture, some necessary components of such a system (including siting, permitting, and operating requirements and precautionary measures to protect the environment and coastal communities), and mentioned that NOAA would be "reassessing existing Department of Commerce and NOAA Aquaculture Policies." That testimony is on line at:

<http://www.legislative.noaa.gov/Testimony/Balsinger090909.pdf>.

(b) Louis Capps has introduced a bill (HR 4363) to establish federal aquaculture legislation. Initial review of the bill indicates strong language for environmental protection. The CWG open ocean aquaculture report continues to be relevant and can be used in the future as appropriate.

VII. OTHER SAC ISSUES

(a) In February there will be an announcement for several positions on the SAC due to expiring terms including: Tourism alternate, Recreational fishing member and alternate, Education member and alternate, public at-large alternate (2 seats).

(b) In response to a SAC letter highlighting the need for more MERITO funding, Dan Basta gave CINMS an immediate "advance" on its budget allocation. This funding will assure that the program's administrative labor costs will be covered this year. Kristi, Debra, and Maria Petueli were thanked for their work on the letter.

(c) Dan Basta is expected to attend the March 19 SAC meeting in Ventura.

(d) Suggested Recommendations for Council Priorities in 2010 include the following:

- Ocean Acidification (what role will Sanctuaries play)
- Shipping and Shipping Lanes (could fall under Marine Spatial Planning, look at Oak Park High School & Bren Project for assistance)

- Offshore Renewable Energy (PG&E project demonstrates timeliness of this issue)
- Oil Platform Removal (R2R)
- Boundary Expansion